



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 November 2013

Information required on the anti Shia group called "Lashkare Jhangvi" Have they targeted Shia students in Pakistan?

A BBC News profile of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) states:

“Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) is one of Pakistan's most violent Sunni Muslim militant groups. It takes its name from the late Sunni Cleric Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who spearheaded the anti-Shia campaign which began in the country 30 years ago as a counter-movement to the Iranian Islamic revolution. Mr Jhangvi was a founding member of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), a group blamed by many for introducing sectarian violence to the country.” (BBC News (11 January 2013) *Profile: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*)

A report from the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point states:

“Lashkar-i-jhangvi (Ij) is one of the world's most secretive terrorist groups. Little information exists on the organization, even though it is an al-Qa`ida affiliate that is regularly blamed for terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Although the LJ was formed as the armed wing of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), it has morphed into the collective armed wing of various Deobandi terrorist groups. Statements about the LJ from the Pakistani government and media suggest that the group is the most deadly Islamist terrorist organization in the world outside the Indian-controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir. This description, however, is not completely accurate, and it has served both the handlers of jihadist groups in the Pakistani military as well as other Islamist terrorist groups who benefit by blaming the LJ for most terrorist attacks in Pakistan outside the tribal areas.” (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (3 September 2009) *A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi*)

An Australian Government Refugee Review Tribunal issues paper on militant groups in Pakistan states:

“Some reports suggest that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), a Punjab-based Sunni Deobandi militant group, was formed in 1996 by disgruntled former members of the SSP who believed that the SSP was moving away from its initial radical anti-Shia ideals, set by the group's late founder Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi.⁷⁰ Others argue that LeJ was created by the SSP leadership to act as an armed wing separate from the political wing, to further the political aims of the SSP while allowing the LeJ to continue violent sectarian activities. While the SSP attempts to distance itself publicly from the actions of LeJ, and claims that the outfits are not formally linked, few analysts of the security situation in Pakistan believe this to be the case. The SSP and LeJ share the same sectarian beliefs, both source their members from Deobandi madrassas in Punjab and both have the same ideological goals.” (Australian Government Refugee Review Tribunal (January 2013) *Pakistan Militant Groups*, p.13)

This paper refers to the aims of LeJ as follows:

“LeJ’s stated aims are: to make Pakistan a Sunni state, through violent means if necessary; to have Shias declared non-Muslims; and to eliminate followers of other faiths, particularly Jews, Christians and Hindus. A number of sources agree that LeJ is among the most violent and dangerous sectarian militant organisations that has existed in Pakistan. Siddique claims that LeJ ‘is believed to have been behind most of the attacks against Western targets in Pakistan since 9/11’, and describes LeJ’s role in fomenting sectarian violence in Pakistan as ‘pivotal.’” (ibid, p.13)

This paper also states:

“LeJ has primarily directed its sectarian attacks against Hazaras in Balochistan in 2012. 46 people were killed in sectarian violence in Quetta up to July 2012, primarily during April and May, and in June 2012 an LeJ bomb attack on a bus transporting Shia pilgrims near Quetta killed 15 people. In December 2012 19 Shia pilgrims were killed by a remotely detonated bomb in Mastung district of Balochistan, and although LeJ did not claim responsibility, a New York Times report on the incident notes that LeJ have repeatedly singled out Shias in Balochistan for attack. A subsequent report in The Express Tribune stated that Jaish al Islami, a splinter group of LeJ, claimed responsibility for the attack.” (ibid, p.15)

A Human Rights Watch report states:

“Since 2012, well over 650 Shia Muslims have been killed in targeted attacks across Pakistan, the majority from the Hazara community in Balochistan province. Sunni militant groups, such as the ostensibly banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi, operate with widespread impunity across Pakistan.” (Human Rights Watch (23 August 2013) *Pakistan: 10 Steps to Improve Human Rights*)

See also a Human Rights Watch report which states:

“Sunni militant groups such as the banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi have historically had links to the Pakistani military and its intelligence agencies. While the military denies any ongoing links to such groups, Lashkar-e Jhangvi continues to operate with impunity even in areas where state authority is well established, such as Punjab province and Karachi.” (Human Rights Watch (11 November 2013) *Pakistan: Deter Escalating Attacks on Shia Muslims*)

An article from the Islamabad-based newspaper Sunday Times refers to an attack in 2012 on a bus carrying students as follows:

“In yet another sectarian attack on Monday, claimed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a bomber targeted a bus carrying students of an IT institute of the city. Five were killed and at least 70 injured. Many of the students were Hazarwals. A large number of the injured are still in a critical condition.” (Sunday Times (Islamabad) (24 June 2012) *Quetta horrors*)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report on an attack in 2013 on a bus carrying students states:

“A Pakistani militant group has claimed responsibility for twin deadly attacks in the southwestern city of Quetta over the weekend. The extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi said it carried out the attacks that killed at least 24 people. On June 15, militants bombed a bus carrying female students, killing at least 14 people.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (16 June 2013) *Pakistan: Sunni militant group claims twin Quetta attacks*)

See also a Agence France Presse report which states:

“Weeping relatives gathered Sunday to identify the charred remains of loved ones killed in a double attack in Pakistan’s troubled southwest claimed by a banned Sunni militant group. At least 25 people were killed on Saturday when militants blew up a bus carrying female students in Quetta, capital of restive Baluchistan province, and then stormed a hospital where survivors had been taken for treatment. The extremist sectarian outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), responsible for a string of outrages against Pakistan’s Shiite Muslim minority, said it was behind both attacks. An LeJ spokesman said a female suicide bomber struck the bus -- a rare tactic in Pakistan -- before gunmen attacked the hospital, claiming the strikes were revenge for an operation by security forces earlier this month.” (Agence France Presse (16 June 2013) *Weeping families identify Pakistan victims*)

References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

ACCORD

BBC News

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Human Rights Watch

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

South Asia Terrorism Portal

UK Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State